UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/325
29 April 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 11 APRIL 1996 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the meeting held on 15 March 1996 by the Security Council on the situation in Somalia, during which a number of ideas were put forward on how the international community might address that situation. Having given careful consideration to these ideas, I wish to share the following observations with the members of the Council.

Regarding the suggestion to relocate the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) from Nairobi to a location within Somalia, it should be noted that Mogadishu would not at present be a practical option for two reasons: first, it would force the United Nations to choose between the North and the South of the divided city, thereby inviting refusal from one or the other main faction to deal with UNPOS; and second, the increased tension brought about by recent fighting between the forces of Mr. Osman Atto and those of General Aidid has heightened security concerns in the Somali capital. As for other locations within Somalia, they would hardly serve their purpose since an UNPOS based away from Mogadishu would have little contact with faction leaders elsewhere. One possibility for future consideration could be for UNPOS to establish a sub-office in a city such as Bossasso in the Northeast. However, this would have financial implications.

I have also considered the idea of appointing a high-level African personality to undertake a goodwill mission to Somalia, although it might be difficult to find a personality who would accept such an undertaking, given the intractability of the problems and the intransigence of the Somali factions. In addition, as you will recall, my efforts to dispatch envoys on two earlier occasions did not succeed because of the objections of at least one of the faction leaders concerned. I trust therefore that the Council will understand my reluctance to give those in Somalia who are not well disposed towards the idea of such a mission another opportunity to frustrate an initiative by the United Nations.

A fact-finding mission dispatched jointly by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) could be subject to the same difficulties. The OAU has been unable to dispatch such a mission for some time for reasons similar to those that have prevented me from sending an envoy. There is little

reason to believe that a joint United Nations/OAU mission would elicit a different reaction. Nevertheless, a joint mission might have a better chance of being accepted if it were sent at the express request of the Security Council. I am therefore exploring the feasibility of such a mission with the Secretary-General of the OAU.

The importance of reopening the Mogadishu seaport was also emphasized during the Security Council's meeting of 15 March. As you will recall, prior to the withdrawal of UNOSOM II from Somalia, the two sides in Mogadishu, with UNOSOM II's assistance, had signed a number of agreements to manage the port jointly and to ensure its smooth operation. However, disputes quickly emerged between the factions involved, particularly over the distribution of tax revenues, and led to the closure of the port. Nothing has occurred since then to change the situation.

As you know, the United Nations system has continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Somalia, often under very difficult conditions. A recent inter-agency humanitarian mission to this country noted that the overall situation was still fragile, with serious threats of famine should the major harvest next August fail and the security situation deteriorate. The mission concluded that the continued presence of United Nations agencies in Somalia was essential in spite of the prevailing insecurity and operational difficulties. It strongly recommended that a Humanitarian Programme for Somalia cover humanitarian and rehabilitation needs on the basis of a regional approach. For effective assistance, the provision of adequate resources will be essential. To this end, a United Nations consolidated resource mobilization document for Somalia is under preparation. It will reflect a common United Nations strategy, including a short-term emergency contingency plan. I hope that United Nations humanitarian activities in Somalia will continue to benefit from the special attention and support of the members of the Council and the donor community.

I should be grateful if you would bring the contents of this letter to the attention of the members of the Council.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI